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Proposed strategic framework for the period 2016-2017

Part two: biennial programme plan

Programme 21
International protection, durable solutions and assistance to refugees

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Overall orientation

21.1 The overall objective of the programme is to ensure international protection to refugees and others of concern to the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), and to seek permanent solutions to their problems in cooperation with States and other organizations, including through the provision of humanitarian assistance.

21.2 The mandate for the programme is contained in General Assembly resolution 319 A (IV), by which the Assembly established UNHCR as from 1 January 1951, and resolution 428 (V), which sets out the statute of the Office. The Assembly has also called upon the High Commissioner to ensure that refugees returning voluntarily to their countries of origin ("returnees") receive assistance to help sustainable reintegration, as well as to monitor their safety and well-being upon return. UNHCR has also been mandated to address the situation of stateless persons in accordance with the Convention relating to the Status of Stateless Persons (1954) and the Convention on the Reduction of Statelessness (1961). UNHCR provides humanitarian assistance and protection to internally displaced persons, working in cooperation with the United Nations Emergency Relief Coordinator or at a specific request of the Secretary-General. In its work for internally displaced persons and as part of the collaborative response of the United Nations system to internal displacement, UNHCR has been given special lead or co-lead responsibility for protection, emergency shelter and camp management/coordination cluster areas.

21.3 The basic provisions of the UNHCR statute were built upon by the Assembly in its resolution 832 (IX). Through the adoption by the Assembly of its resolution 58/153 on implementing actions, UNHCR was given a renewed mandate to address the challenge of forced displacement through a mission based on a spirit of solidarity, responsibility and burden-sharing, with an abiding commitment to make the Office a truly multilateral institution.

21.4 The international legal basis for the protection of refugees finds its principal expression in the 1951 Convention and the 1967 Protocol relating to the Status of Refugees and is supplemented by regional instruments, such as the 1969 Organization of African Unity Convention governing the specific aspects of refugee problems in Africa (OAU Convention) and the 1984 Cartagena Declaration on Refugees. The international legal basis for addressing the situation of stateless persons stems from the 1954 and 1961 Conventions. In addition, other international human rights instruments, such as the 1989 Convention on the Rights of the Child, are relevant in providing international protection to refugees, stateless persons, internally displaced persons, returnees and others of concern.

21.5 The overall strategy for the period 2016-2017 will cover a range of activities that UNHCR will undertake in cooperation with States and various organizations. It will be guided by the UNHCR global strategic priorities and incorporate concerted responses to the challenges met by the Office in the previous biennium, including urban and out-of-camp populations, large-scale refugee emergencies, linkages with development actors regarding asylum-migration nexus issues and coordinated response to the problems faced by internally displaced persons. It will also be guided by pledges that States made to improve the protection of refugees and stateless persons during the event commemorating the anniversaries of the 1951

Convention relating to the Status of Refugees and the 1961 Convention on the Reduction of Statelessness held in 2011.

21.6 Notable among the activities to be implemented for the period 2016-2017 are the following:

(a) Pursuing comprehensive strategies, in cooperation with States and organizations, for achieving durable solutions for refugees and others of concern, while promoting effective protection of displaced persons;

(b) Strengthening the legal regime for international protection, including through the promotion of accessions to international and regional instruments relating to the status of refugees or otherwise benefiting refugees, the effective implementation of refugee rights, and the promotion and dissemination of refugee law and protection principles;

(c) Enhancing and reinforcing host country capacities to provide asylum and protection;

(d) Ensuring that UNHCR fully participates in and supports the strengthened collaborative response of the United Nations to situations of internal displacement;

(e) Continuing to develop contingency planning, emergency preparedness and response capabilities, in coordination with other organizations, so as to respond effectively and efficiently to situations of forced displacement;

(f) Promoting gender equality and ensuring that UNHCR and its partners mainstream into all aspects of programme delivery full consideration of the rights of persons of concern, as well as the particular needs and capacities, ascertained through participatory assessments, of refugee women and children, elderly refugees, refugees with disabilities and other persons with specific needs;

(g) Ensuring the security of refugee camps, settlements and areas of return, as well as their civilian and humanitarian character, and exploring further concrete ways of enhancing the safety and security of UNHCR staff and other humanitarian workers working with refugees and returnees;

(h) Systematically following up on relevant recommendations in the plans of action emanating from international conferences and involving other humanitarian and development organizations, in the provision of assistance to persons of concern to UNHCR, as well as in the search for durable solutions;

(i) Advocating for the prevention and reduction of statelessness as well as the protection of stateless persons by promoting the accession by States to the relevant international instruments and working with States to facilitate the acquisition or reacquisition of nationality by stateless persons, or its confirmation.

21.7 The programme is under the intergovernmental guidance of the Executive Committee of the Programme of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, in accordance with its terms of reference, as adopted by the General Assembly in its resolution 1166 (XII). In its resolution 672 (XXV), the Economic and Social Council established the Executive Committee of the High Commissioner's Programme, which came into existence on 1 January 1959. Reaffirming the terms of reference laid down by the General Assembly, the Council decided that the Executive Committee, being entrusted with the terms of reference set forth in General Assembly resolution 1166 (XII), should:

(a) determine the general policies under which the High Commissioner should plan, develop and administer the programmes and projects required to help solve the problems referred to in its resolution 1166 (XII);

(b) review at least annually the use of funds made available to the High Commissioner and the programmes and projects being proposed or carried out by the Office of the High Commissioner; and

(c) have authority to make changes in and give final approval for the use of funds and the programmes and projects referred to in subparagraphs (a) and (b) above.

Although established by the Economic and Social Council, which elects its members, the Executive Committee functions as a subsidiary organ of the General Assembly and is the key advisory body of UNHCR. The annual cycle of meetings of the Executive Committee consists of one annual plenary session and a number of intersessional meetings of the Standing Committee. Reports on the sessions of the Executive Committee are submitted to the General Assembly as addenda to the reports of the High Commissioner. The High Commissioner, who is elected by the General Assembly on the nomination of the Secretary-General, provides the overall direction, supervision and management of the activities under this programme. The functions of the High Commissioner are set out in the annex to the statute of UNHCR. The High Commissioner is assisted by a Deputy High Commissioner and by two Assistant High Commissioners, for Protection and for Operations, respectively.

Objective of the Organization: To ensure international protection to refugees and other persons of concern to the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, and to achieve permanent solutions to their problems in cooperation with States and other organizations, including through the provision of humanitarian assistance

Expected accomplishments of the Secretariat	Indicators of achievement
(a) Improved overall protection environment for refugees and others of concern	(a) (i) Increased number of ratifications/ accessions to the 1954 and 1961 Conventions related to Statelessness
	(ii) Increased number of ratifications/ accessions to the 2009 Convention for the Protection of and Assistance to Internally Displaced Persons in Africa
	(iii) Increased participation of government and partner staff in learning activities concerning international protection standards
(b) Refugees and others of concern are treated fairly and efficiently when seeking protection, and receive adequate documentation	(b) (i) Increased percentage of refugees and asylum seekers who are registered on an individual basis
	(ii) Increased percentage of refugees and others of concern who receive individual identity and civil documentation

(c) Increased safety from violence and exploitation for refugees and others of concern, especially women and children	(c) (i) Increased number of UNHCR operations in which support to survivors of sexual and gender-based violence has improved (ii) Increased percentage of unaccompanied and separated children for whom a "best interests" process has been initiated
(d) The basic needs of refugees and others of concern are met and essential services are provided without discrimination and with specific consideration to age, gender and physical condition	(d) (i) Increased number of camps where global acute malnutrition levels meet acceptable standards (ii) Increased percentage of households of refugees and others of concern with adequate dwellings (iii) Increased number of camps where the mortality rate of children of concern under 5 years of age meets acceptable standards (iv) Increased percentage of refugee children aged 6 to 13 enrolled in primary education
(e) Refugees and others of concern, both men and women, participate equally within their communities and their self-reliance is promoted	(e) (i) Increased number of sites where management structures have 50 per cent active female participation (ii) Increased number of UNHCR operations implementing comprehensive strategies to promote the self-reliance of refugees and others of concern
(f) Progress in finding durable solutions for refugees supported by sustained international cooperation	(f) (i) Increased number of countries where refugees and others of concern benefit from joint programming on durable solutions between UNHCR and other agencies (ii) Increased percentage of persons who have departed for resettlement among those whose applications have been submitted (iii) Increased percentage of UNHCR operations supporting national authorities with the local integration of refugees
(g) Strengthened partnership and emergency-response capacity to meet the needs of persons of concern	(g) (i) Maintained percentage of UNHCR budget implemented through partners

	(ii) Increased percentage of emergencies in which first delivery of protection and relief takes place within three days of the onset of an emergency
	(iii) Increased number of appropriately trained staff (including partners) deployed to emergencies

Strategy

21.8 The implementation of the programme falls under the overall responsibility of: the Regional Bureaux of UNHCR; the Division of International Protection; the Division of Programme Support and Management; the Division of Emergency, Security and Supply; and the Division of Financial and Administrative Management. The Office will continue to strive to improve accountability, financial and programme control as well as risk management.

21.9 Further accessions to the 1951 Convention and 1967 Protocol relating to the Status of Refugees, as well as to the 1954 Convention relating to the Status of Stateless Persons and 1961 Convention on the Reduction of Statelessness will be promoted. Monitoring of the observance by States of international legal standards for the treatment of refugees, especially the fundamental principles of access to asylum and non-refoulement, will contribute to ensuring the effective implementation of refugee rights by the States concerned. This will involve promoting the establishment by States of fair and efficient procedures for the determination of refugee status as well as ensuring that all persons seeking international protection are granted access to those procedures and mechanisms. Continued attention will be given specifically to age, gender and diversity sensitivities in States' asylum systems and procedures. The Office will deliver appropriate training and capacity-building services, and enhance expertise to determine refugee status. UNHCR will work with Governments to raise awareness that gender-related forms of persecution may be grounds for refugee status.

21.10 The Office will continue to encourage States to ensure the protection of refugees and others of concern within broader migration movements. UNHCR will continue to be involved in the search for solutions for those rescued at sea or found as stowaways, and who are in need of international protection.

21.11 The promotion and dissemination of refugee law and protection principles, particularly through training, in cooperation with governmental officials, non-governmental organizations, academic institutions and other relevant organizations, will be another means of achieving the stated objective. To strengthen international refugee protection, UNHCR will continue to build partnerships and promote collaboration on refugee protection with a wide range of actors. Protection of internally displaced persons will be based on criteria enumerated in the relevant resolutions of the General Assembly and in close collaboration with other concerned entities and agencies.

21.12 UNHCR will strive to ensure the optimal alignment of its operational resources with the needs of refugees and others of concern. The Office continues to build upon the positive results of comprehensive and participatory approaches to

planning in order to ensure that the needs and capacities of men, women and children of concern form the foundation of programme design. This will include the use of standards and indicators across the full spectrum of the work of the Office as a means of identifying protection and assistance gaps and of channelling resources to ensure that acceptable standards are met in critical situations. Tools for recording operational data, including demographic, registration and profiling information, situational analysis and planning will be further systematized.

21.13 The Office will build upon the outcomes of its public health strategic plans for 2014-2018 for HIV and AIDS, malaria control, nutrition and food security, reproductive health and water and sanitation to ensure that prevention, care and treatment policies and programmes meet international standards. It will use monitoring standards in other key areas, including through the introduction of a water, sanitation and hygiene monitoring system. The UNHCR shelter strategy will be rolled out to raise the quality of emergency and transitional shelter, including through the development of innovative, cost-effective, light and manageable alternatives to tents. UNHCR will carry on giving priority to continued development of innovative, cost-effective and manageable alternatives in shelter responses, as well as environmental-conservation and sustainable-resource management in its programmes. When delivering its services, special focus will be given to the specificities of the urban and out-of-camp populations.

21.14 Finding durable solutions for millions of refugees and internally displaced persons will be central to the programme of work. The Office will seek opportunities to resolve complex and protracted displacement situations that require comprehensive, and often regional, approaches through voluntary return, and, where appropriate and feasible, through local integration and resettlement. UNHCR will also work with partners to ensure that durable solutions to displacement form part of broader development and peacebuilding agendas. To foster the self-reliance of populations pending solutions, UNHCR will increase interventions to improve livelihoods, including vocational and skills training; support for agriculture, livestock and fisheries; and access to financial services or microfinance.

21.15 Effective operational and strategic partnerships will remain a priority for the Office, as a means of enhancing protection, increasing efficiency and strengthening local capacities for response. The Office will continue to promote the implementation of its programmes through partners, with special emphasis on supporting national partners. It will also further strengthen its information-management, coordination and support capacities to facilitate a more predictable and accountable inter-agency engagement.

21.16 The Office will continue to strengthen its emergency preparedness and response capacity, including through strong emergency management and the coordination role of the Division of Emergency, Security and Supply. The focus for the period 2016-2017 will be to continue to strengthen senior leadership capacity for emergency operations and the speed and efficiency of the UNHCR delivery of assistance, and to provide analytical security advice that enables operations even in areas where residual risks remain. UNHCR will continue to expand strategic partnerships in order to broaden the capacity and networks of expertise with which to respond to emergencies. UNHCR will build on and, where appropriate, improve its emergency and security policies, tools, and capacity-building initiatives and training to ensure that its staff and partners are as well equipped as possible.

Legislative mandates

Conventions and conference declarations

Convention relating to the Status of Refugees (1951) and its Protocol (1967)

Convention relating to the Status of Stateless Persons (1954)

Convention on the Reduction of Statelessness (1961)

Organization of African Unity Convention governing the specific aspects of refugee problems in Africa (1969)

Cartagena Declaration on Refugees (1984)

Convention on the Rights of the Child (General Assembly resolution 44/25) (1989)

San José Declaration on Refugees and Displaced Persons (1994)

African Union Convention for the Protection of and Assistance to Internally Displaced Persons in Africa (2009)

General Assembly resolutions

319A (IV)	Refugees and stateless persons
428 (V)	Statute of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
538B (VI)	Assistance and protection of refugees
1166 (XII)	International assistance to refugees within the mandate of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
50/152	Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
58/153	Implementing actions proposed by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees to strengthen the capacity of his Office to carry out its mandate
66/133	Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
66/134	Enlargement of the Executive Committee of the Programme of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
66/135	Assistance to refugees, returnees and displaced persons in Africa

Executive Committee

A/AC.96/965/Add.1	Agenda for Protection